

The Seasport Centre

Egmont Højskolen has taken the initiative to start a Seasport Centre (www.hou-seasport.dk), that provides holiday homes, training facilities, sailing boats and other equipment that enables disabled people to sail and engage in other maritime activities.

The centre also includes an old shipyard for the repair and construction of wooden boats.

Vocational training for the long-term unemployed, people with disabilities and other marginalised groups is also offered by the school. The training is aimed at the service sector (cleaning, cooking, maintenance and gardening). At the shipyard the trainees are taught to repair and maintain boats and assist yachtsmen and sailors.

Egmont Højskolen, like all other folkehøjskoler in Denmark, is run according to the Danish Free School Act. The most important aspects of this law are:

The folkehøjskoler are free to choose the subject matter and pedagogical methods as long as the general aim of a mind-broadening education directed towards personal development is fulfilled. Students must be 18 years of age to attend a folkehøjskole.

The School is financed by students' fees but with every student the school receives a state subsidy. For students with severe disabilities this amount is increased. Students pay app. Dkr 6,500 a month to attend.

Every folkehøjskole is a self-governing institution with a board of directors, elected by the schools support-organisations. Members of the board of Egmont Højskolen are appointed by "Vanførefonden" (The Foundation of the Disabled), by SAHVA, by the Old Students' Association and various organisations for people with disabilities. The board is responsible for running the school but leaves practical administration to the principal.



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The Danish Folkehøjskole

Basically it is impossible to explain what a "folkehøjskole" is. A very brief rough definition would be that it is a type of school for adults which places the emphasis on general, mind-broadening education. The principal task of a folkehøjskole is to educate its students for life, in other words shed light on some of the basic questions for people in Denmark today, both as individuals and as members of society. It is characteristic of a folkehøjskole that there are no prescribed syllabuses, no exams, no marking. Folkehøjskolerne rely entirely on the willingness and commitment of their students and the ability of the teachers to motivate them. Folkehøjskolerne are residential schools where students and teachers live, eat, work and learn together.

The idea of the folkehøjskolerne is mainly the work of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig (1783-1872), a clergyman and writer. He was the contemporary of two other eminent Danes Hans Christian Andersen and Søren Kierkegaard – both far better known in the world at large than he is. Grundtvig never set out a detailed description of what his folkehøjskole should look like in practice, not for want of imagination but because of his fundamental belief that a folkehøjskole should not simply come straight off an educationalist's drawing board. The essential element is life at the school itself. A folkehøjskole becomes what it is through the individuals of which it is made up.

Today there are about 80 folkehøjskoler in Denmark. Some specialise in particular subjects, others try to incorporate as many subjects in the syllabus as possible.



Egmont Højskolen

Egmont Højskolen was originally founded as a place only for students with mobility impairments by the National Association of the Disabled in Denmark. In 1970 the formal purpose of the organisation was changed to secure real integration of people with disabilities. Today Egmont Højskolen is a school for all but with a special obligation towards people with disabilities. During the school year 2003-2004 about half of the students attending courses at Egmont Højskolen had some kind of disability. Of those about two thirds of the students were severely disabled.

Characteristic of the school today is total accessibility as this has been a main priority over the years. The school has a number of double rooms and single rooms, especially designed to suit the needs of people with disabilities, modern well-equipped classrooms, excellent catering facilities, home helper's service for people with disabilities requiring this (or they may bring their own personal assistants), a lecture hall, a gym etc.

The school is very beautifully situated close to woods and beaches on the outskirts of the small sea port of Hou.



Courses

The main activity at Egmont Højskolen is to run a traditional folkehøjskole. The school offers both long winter courses (18, 24 and 40 weeks) and short courses during the summer period in cooperation with among others the Danish organisations for the disabled.

The syllabus of the winter courses comprises three main fields: Creative subjects, academic subjects and sporting subjects. At present Egmont Højskolen offers students the choice between the following lines: An Art Line, Sailing and Outdoor Living, Social Studies, Media Workshops, Healthy Living, Music and Drama, a General Line, a Green Line, an International Line, a Society, Psyche and Health Line, a Textile Line, and a Sports Line. Besides that courses are offered in various subjects, such as Danish, arithmetic, philosophy, film theory and psychology.

New technology and equipment also have a high priority at Egmont Højskolen.

But life at Egmont Højskolen is much more than attending classes. There are always lots of discussions, projects, concerts, lectures, singing and partying and a study trip abroad during the spring.

Contents of the short summer courses are discussed and agreed on in cooperation with the respective organisations of the disabled or tailored to specific requests or just offered by enthusiastic teachers to the public at large.

